UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

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INTERIOR AGENCIES REACH AGREEMENT ON STABILIZING TOPOCK
MARSH AREA ON LOWER COLORADO RIVER

Secretary Stewart L. Udall said today that Department of the Interior officials have reached agreement on measures for stabilizing water levels in the Topock Marsh on the lower Colorado River near Needles, Calif., to maintain recreation and fish and wildlife values in connection with the channel rectification program now in progress.

The agreement was reached at a conference in Washington, D. C., attended by members of Secretary Udall's administrative and legal staffs, and officials of the Bureau of Reclamation and the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Secretary Udall said the Bureau of Reclamation will construct a dike at the lower end of the Topock Marsh and an inlet channel from the Colorado River into the upper end of the marsh, in order to raise and stabilize water levels within a large portion of the marsh which is highly valued by fishermen and as a feeding and nesting area for waterfowl. The size and exact location of the dike, spoil areas for dumping dredged material from the river channel, and other details will be worked out by Reclamation and Fish and Wildlife Service field staffs, Secretary Udall added. State and local officials will also be consulted on the measures to be taken.

"These measures will raise the water level in a large area of the Topock Marsh by two or three feet," Secretary Udall said, "and remove any possible threat to fish and wildlife values that would be caused by the natural channel degradation now taking place."

Secretary Udall added that a series of similar meetings will be held in the field to coordinate recreation, fish and wildlife, and water conservation activities on other reaches of the lower Colorado River. Discussions will include Reclamation's planned channelization and water salvage work on the lower river which are estimated to be capable of conserving an average of 256,000 acre-feet of water every year for beneficial uses.